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RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT

— in memory of S. Kappen —

Shobha Raghuram

Visthar

Bangalore

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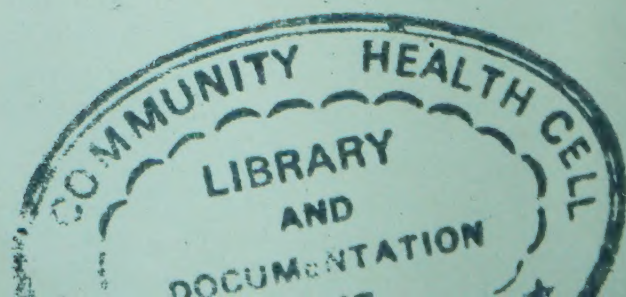
Rethinking Development

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FOREWORD

"Centuries of foreign domination and colonialism have made us materially and mentally slaves. Our economy is still to a considerable extent, geared to the benefit of foreign capitalism or Soviet socialism. We are likewise subjected to a steady and powerful cultural invasion from the West to which we all too easily succumb. Even the refuse of Western civilisation finds an honoured place on our altars. We are progressively being reduced to a nation of cultural bastards. The colonial mentality has taken such deep root in the country that we can envision our future only in terms of imported models... Now the time has come to reverse this trend by rediscovering our own soul...", wrote Kappen in 1977. He was consistent in his critique of the dominant paradigm of development which marginalises and alienates people. In one of his latter articles titled "Towards an alternative cultural paradigm of development"(1993) Kappen wrote, "the kind of development we are pursuing is not only ambivalent and largely counter productive, but also an instrument of cultural recolonisation".

Kappen was concerned that the development of science and technology has led to a devaluation of other forms of wisdom. He also agonised over the fact that while religious revivalism and fundamentalism is gaining ground, people are losing their moorings in authentic religion. There is a drying up of faith and love. The only discernible hope, he felt, is in the struggle of the marginalised masses for a richer and fuller life. A new social order can be created by only such who have the courage to dissent. For, creative dissent is an

expression of human freedom and the essence of democracy. In Kappen's words, "Where there is humanizing action - creative, subversive or celebrative - there is an utopia at work not as a blueprint for action nor as a state of affairs to be realised once and for all but as a receding horizon of hope. As the adverse effects of middle class capitulation to corporate neocolonial fascism begin to be felt by the marginalised majorities of Asia and Africa, there will be a second wave of nationalist liberation movements aimed at recovering cultural identity and national sovereignty. With it the counter utopia of the less industrialised people will assume the form of a new world order in which there will be no dualism of centre and periphery, of developed and developing".

Though marginalised by the establishment, Kappen sustained his search propelled by his commitment to the 'Kingdom of God', to a 'socialist society' where the greatest need of a person becomes the need for the other. The people who gathered around him - activists, artists, students, writers and intellectuals - were inspired and challenged by him. In Kappen there was a merging of the message and the messenger. His courage of conviction and life style was a challenge to status-quoists, pseudo-radicals and messiahs of the market. Kappen's spirit remained unconquered till the end, as he returned to Mother Earth on the 30th of November 1993. The life and vision of Kappen challenges and sustains us as we continue our journey in this alienating and alienated world.

We are grateful to all those who participated in the Kappen memorial meeting, especially the speakers - Shobha Raghuram, B. Ramdas and M.G.S. Narayan. We particularly acknowledge the contribution of Shobha in preparing her talk for publication, inspite of her varied involvements and busy schedule. We hope this booklet will contribute towards the search for an alternative model of development.

VISTHAR

CONTENTS

1

- a. Introduction: Looking back.
- b. Globalisation: Reforms, debt, development aid and competing inequalities

2

- a. The human predicament of migration: A challenge to development efforts
- b. International migration: North-South imbalances.
- c. Internal migration: The India case -
 - i. Development exodus and the NEP;
 - ii. The growth of the informal sector and communalism;
 - iii. Limits to planning.

It was an honour for me to have been asked to deliver a lecture on the second death anniversary of Father Kappen. My last communication with Father Kappen was during his illness. I sent him a copy of Odysseus Elytis's poem "With what stones, what blood, and what iron..." written in 1943. He replied that he liked it greatly and that he was immediately setting himself the task of translating it into Malayalam for the press. Time was not to be on his side, but that was Father Kappen - always inspired by great instances in history and always taking many with him on his journeys. He discovered hope where no one else saw possibilities. During three years of successive crippling illnesses and between surgeries, it was Father Kappen who urged me to write and insisted that I participate in NGO meetings. I remain indebted to him for the hope and guidance he gave me when it mattered most.

In this paper I have brought together what I said in my talk at the Kappen memorial meeting. It consists of two parts: The first, which begins with introductory remarks, explores briefly what globalisation has meant for Third World countries; the second examines in somewhat greater detail the problem of migration, both international and internal. These two parts illustrate why conventional development strategies have failed, perhaps unintentionally. This brings me then to why we must rethink development and how this can be done only if development stops being a rationalistic, techno-instrumentalist enterprise and policy makers start to value the need for philosophical self-reflexivity, a point which Father Kappen would have endorsed fully.

1

a. Introduction: Looking back

We are close to completing half-a-century of our existence as an independent nation; yet new forms of bondage are rising, phoenix-like, from unresolved colonial histories. Meanwhile the passing of the fifth centennial of Columbus's voyage has thrown into relief 500 years of the history of the Europeanisation of the world.

As noted by Alvares in 'Decolonizing History', this voyage set in motion a deadly chain of events which radically transformed the planet. A consequence of this fateful journey and others which followed soon after, was that the destinies of Europe, South America, Africa and Asia were soon intermeshed. The balance sheet of this 500-year encounter between the West and our part of the world is yet to be drawn up; meanwhile, strong opinions are being expressed by cultural auditors on either side. For the Europeans the fifth centennial was an occasion for pomp and celebration. For the people inhabiting the worlds allegedly "discovered" by Columbus, da Gama, and Albuquerque, the memory of the last five centuries, largely years of trauma and violence, cannot be erased. The Africans are, in fact, demanding reparations, while the South Americans are insisting that what occurred during 1492 and thereafter cannot be glossed over as an 'encounter' between two worlds: it was an invasion coupled with a violent conquest and takeover. Kappen, Alvares, Nandy, and the Subaltern-Studies group have all looked at the resulting politics of knowledge, the cultural geographies that have marked the North-South divide, including the continued progression of economic inequalities. In 'How the Other Half Dies' Susan George carries the discussion on the politics of this divide forward to show that new forms of intellectual and economic colonization have dominated the development debate: one set of values and norms for North countries and another for South countries, revealed, e.g., in structural-reform conditionalities, the role of the state in welfare, the issues of consumption and population, migration, and the crucial area of cultural identity and power relations. Though this domination has led to the making of modern institutions in the colonies, it has been accompanied by the dismantling of local institutions.

Vietnam, Cambodia, Angola, and Rwanda have become icons of the latter half of our century. Their histories were in many ways sites of nation-state aggression and, therefore, not viewed as 'hard development' concerns. Between 1945 and 1989, 138 wars have been fought, resulting in some 23 million deaths. The Korean War caused 3 million deaths, the Vietnam War 2 million. All these 138 wars were fought in the Third World. Between 1970 and 1989 the Soviet Union and the United States accounted for 70% of the \$388 billion worth of weapons sold to the Middle East (\$168 billion), Africa (\$65 billion),

and South Asia (\$50 billion) [1]. Philosophically 'development and growth' have been perceived as a progressive, altruistic and peaceful amelioration of the conditions of people's lives. However, in concrete history they have suffered from increasingly violent contestations for power: The development of a few has always been secured at the cost of losses to others; it has also been accompanied by the victory of the dominant perception that economic growth is a more worthy goal than moral norms of self-worth, of identity and its recognition. Anyone involved in issues close to the survival of those pushed to the fringes of social life will agree that there is little in the social history of development to convince us that our theories and strategies have been right.

Just as the Gulf War continues to be a reminder of the success and growth of the Pentagon Complex, Bhopal and Bhagalpur are a reminder, for us in the Indian sub-continent, that we have become excellent at carrying on with the 'business-as-usual' approach of social development. Indeed, international and national development institutions, in which large human and financial investments have been made, have either given up exercising the bargaining space and the teeth they once had, or, by passive acceptance, not acted as public-interest institutions which safeguard, at all cost, human dignity. The poverty of commitment of those in power reminds us that the paths to social development begin with ground realities and are not merely the rhetoric of aspirations, which evaporates quickly, leaving the world to run out its course, tilted largely in favour of the dominant forces. Ethnic conflicts, racial genocides, child labour, large populations, without even minimal gains in security (e.g., minimum wages, compulsory education, non-discriminatory access to resources), raise serious questions about the role of development institutions in the 20th century.

b. Globalisation : Reforms, debt, development aid and competing inequalities

These severe economic and power inequalities that dog North-South relations call for drastic redefinitions in cultural, political, economic and social arenas for the structural-adjustment reforms initiated by multilateral lending institutions and national governments in many

developing countries have further exacerbated the issues of social equity both within and between these countries. Take India, for example: with 16% of the world's population, 1/3 of the world's poor, a per capita income of 1/13 of the advanced countries and 1/3 of the developing countries, and ranking 135th in the Human Development Index [2], it almost defaulted in 1991 on its external debt, a legacy of the massive fiscal deficits of the late 1980s. The government opted for an immediate devaluation of the rupee, liberalized direct foreign investment, and loosened bureaucratic controls on industry. The stabilization measures included the rebuilding of critically low foreign-exchange reserves, a thrust on resource mobilisation by way of cutting the non-plan expenditure, and a hike in the prices of petroleum products. The public-sector cuts, it was hoped, would reduce inefficiency. The sizeable support of multilateral lending institutions was viewed by many as an important watershed in India, putting an end to the Nehruvian model of self reliance, a planned and regulated market, and a public-sector-oriented economy with strong social-welfare priorities. The Reform Policies that were initiated aligned India more closely with global prescriptions principally in the areas of trade liberalisation and the opening up of markets, but not in the areas of migration or real economic opportunities for the very poor, those left outside of the 'development' machinery. It is not surprising, then, that India today stands as the world's third most indebted nation.

The reform processes have created severe imbalances in other developing countries as well. Consider the African example: Debt repayments account for an annual transfer of \$10 billion from Africa to the North. Every Zambian citizen owes his country's external creditors \$1000 - three times what he or she can expect to earn in a year. Reform in Zambia led to a 200% increase in the price of maize, so World Bank economists argued that the lot of the poor farmer had improved. But in reality the rural poor, with no transport or marketing facilities, could not reach the big markets. Too marginalised to enter the process of the much-touted globalization, in real terms they were further impoverished. Africa is the only continent where nutrition levels did not improve over the 1980s, where primary-school enrolment ratios declined by 5% during this decade, and where the

World Bank predicts a major increase in poverty levels in the 1990s. A UNICEF report says that, for every dollar of aid from industrialised nations, Third World nations have paid back three dollars. And, of the total exchequer in Africa, 3.9% is spent on health whereas 15.8% is used to repay the interest on their debt. These statistics reveal little about the real anguish, in existential terms, of the people of Africa, of the violence to their ways of being, and of the desecration of their communities.

The South-American experience is hardly different. The Institute of Alternative Policies for the Southern Cone of Latin America, based in Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina, has built up chilling evidence to show that thirteen years of restructuring the economy and diverting savings to investments in exports has all been done at the expense of the internal economy. They followed the IMF-World Bank recipe for the development of the entire South, only to find, as in the case of Brazil, that their debt increased from \$64 billion in 1980 to \$121 billion in 1989, even though \$148 billion had been paid for debt servicing in the interim period.

Let me end the story of this debt burden with a specific example: In the late 1970s, 18 out of 21 Latin American nations were under military dictatorships. In Brazil they used their loans to invest in huge energy projects that were useful to the private sector. One such project involved the construction of the Tucuni dam. A Brazilian state company along with ALCOA and ALCAN (both transnational companies) invested billions of dollars in this project. Native forests were destroyed and native peoples displaced. To meet pressing deadlines the government used Agent Orange to defoliate the region and then submerged the leafless tree trunks under water. Now, 14 years later, the trees are rotting and citizens are paying millions of dollars to clean up the excessive amount of organic matter that is decomposing under water. The energy from the hydroelectric plant is sold at \$13-20 per megawatt when the production cost is \$48. Thus Brazilian taxpayers are subsidizing the transnational corporations.

Many refer to the 1980's as a 'lost decade' for development. Will the 1990's be different? The prospects look bleak: Take the large number

of severely indebted, low-income countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and the many severely indebted lower-middle-income countries like Jamaica and the Philippines, whose economic recovery seems elusive despite a decade of adjustment efforts; consider also the independent republics of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia whose political structures are fissured, incomplete, and whose economic disruption could constitute a threat to global stability; and lastly consider Asian countries like India and Vietnam, whose economic problems threaten to convert a once-manageable external-debt burden into a full-blown external-payments crisis; as I said earlier, the prospects for the 1990s do look bleak.

If we take development aid, it too suffers from all the contradictions of the system. This is illustrated by the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) figures: Less than 7% of bilateral ODA is directed towards human-priority concerns, e.g., health, education, and safe drinking water. El Salvador, 5 times richer than Bangladesh, gets 16 times more ODA from the US than does Bangladesh. Development aid has been, by and large, insensitive to the crisis facing global security. It has often reflected the same equations of power and coercion as foreign-trade flows. It is no secret that a majority of development aid returns to the country of origin in the form of payment for know-how, consultancies, hardware, etc. As Mehbub Al Haq has noted "aid carries all the scars of the cold-war era". He argues that it is given more often to strategic allies than to poor nations. Only one-third of ODA is given to the ten countries containing two-thirds of the world's absolute poor. Haq estimates that Egypt gets \$280 per poor person whereas India gets only \$7 per poor person. He shows further that the rich nations route an average of 15% of their GNP to their own 100 million people below the poverty line and " earmark only 0.3% of their GNP for poor nations which contain 1.3 billion of the world's poor". I fear it is unrealistic for us to assume that North countries will act upon the various resolutions passed at several UN meetings, notably the Social Summit, and alter drastically the reality of development aid, which is merely a cosmetic, moral crutch. International diplomacy cannot effect a major restructuring of the world economy, consumption patterns, and the

hard self interests that motivate 90% of development-aid flows. Aid is, after all, only a small variable in the larger issue of global inequalities. One-fifth of humankind, mostly in the industrial countries, has well over four-fifths of global income. This perpetuates over production and over consumption in the North and among the elites of the South. If you take the modern history of development and look for the world's poorest 41 countries, 27 of these belong to Africa and the rest to Asia.

The success of the reform policies in South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia in the '80s cannot be ignored; neither can the devastating violence unleashed by the reform policies in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. During the colonial period, the South-Asian countries experienced a subservient integration with the world economy. Free-market options were operational even then. Today the much-touted global village supposedly represents integration with the world economy, a two-way flow of capital, services, goods, and trade, with a crucial role being played by modern technological revolutions. However, because of the inequitable distribution of wealth across the world, globalisation always takes place in an asymmetrical condition: For example, the extension of patent rights to plant varieties will have serious implications for small farmers, for subsistence economies, and for consumption patterns of the poor, who will have little say in formulating patent laws. These patent regulations, which favour Transnational Corporations (TNCs), may cause whole varieties of biological resources to disappear for both economic and patent reasons. For developing countries and for their poor, the full ramifications of the Uruguay-round of negotiations, where the measures subscribed to have gone into wider areas than trade alone, are yet to be understood.

There is no level playing field for the poor as economic agents and players : TNCs control five-eighths of world investment, three-fourths of world trade, and one-third of all GNP. Most South countries will be mortgaging their production to TNCs for their national governments allow TNCs to build up their assets, as they take over bigger and more docile labour markets to survive. Large labour markets like India, unable to gain more than a 0.5% participation in world trade, have

little bargaining strength. Most South countries, despite several pacts devoted to neo-regionalism, cannot prevent richer and bigger nations from reaping the benefits of economies of scale.

The reform measures have been supportive of the entry of TNCs, so their business practices cannot be questioned easily by national laws when they impede the access to dual-purpose technologies. The stabilisation measures aid the regressive redistribution of world capital, worsening the sad state of affairs in which the net flows of capital are from the Third World to the First World. Ever mounting debt (India's annual payment on borrowings, on interest, and debt servicing outstrip the total annual budget harnessed from revenue collections), increasing rate of interests, and heavily import-led policies have forced Third World countries to export increasing volumes of a narrow range of goods. The G-7 countries, with their long history of recession, ensure that dwindling crumbs may be all that the poor can bargain for. As Rao [2] points out 'The problem of failure of investment rates in the G-7 countries now have tempting opportunities for grabbing Third World assets offered by the various debt settlement schemes'. The growing privatisation of natural resources in fragile rural economies has serious consequences for the poor, particularly tribals. "Globalisation forces economic growth to become a virtue and the internal collective self reliance of smaller south nations to become a devalued political goal"**. Defence purchases, technology transfers, drug processing, and bio-diversity are all major components in the global income ladder. Unskilled and illiterate workers, who service the export of capital from their national economies, may very well be the new class of the displaced, along with unorganised labour. In countries with fragile rural economies, with severe systemic problems of governance, the criminalisation of politics, and the growing acceptance of market solutions to existential issues, integration with command economies can have grave consequences. The market mechanism gains competitive advantage when poverty exists at the systemic level. Many measures from pricing reforms, direct taxation, increased efficiency, strategic industrial policy, etc., have been advocated but to deaf ears. The issue

** Dubey, Muchkund in private communication

of growth with social justice that was the cornerstone of development theory and work is becoming untenable because of the rise of trade-investment bodies and the decline of global institutions. International courts of justice are too remote to be accessed and their articles of agreements remain highly territorial, so there is no international body one can appeal to easily for economic justice.

In my view rethinking development should include the political practice of redress, of struggle, of respecting the human condition. Here lies the enormous task of building solutions for the human condition and the plight in which it finds itself today. The massive and unprecedented projects of social engineering in Third World countries, variously termed industrialization or modernization, the uneven record of development, the interlocking regimes of plenty and of famine, disease and hunger, the loss of subsistence lands, and the threats of modern technologies have all brought about a crisis in the theory of modernisation. Seeking resolutions in alternatives and working at them in hard survival terms is the difficulty. Can violence, displacement and starvation be undone existentially? This is the problem of theory and its limits. And the philosophical search for solutions to the negations present today is painful and bereft of all comfort. Can we return to those, who have been constantly victimised, all that they have lost, including their lost dignity, not to speak of their lost identity?

The rupture of human life and our relations in the social polity cannot be made whole again; but existence helps us to affirm that there are limits to exploitation and the exercise of power. Dominant knowledge systems are powerful tools of legitimization as Kappen saw clearly years ago. He outlined the social costs of dominant knowledges and called for a relentless critique of the instrumentalist view of progress: he argued that culture is ultimately resistance, and that the modern nation state must also include the denominator of communities. These communities have contested dominant theories and became sites of survival for traditional knowledge systems. Development institutions and those who frame policy for them would benefit by dwelling on these perspicacious observations.

a. The human predicament of migration : A challenge to development efforts

"During 1844 and 1910, some 2,50,000 indentured* Indian labourers entered Malaya. The late 19th century Tamil peasant, when he undertook his sojourn to the archipelago, though he may have genuinely looked upon emigration as a way out of poverty and destitution, he/she was definitely not aspiring to 'freedom'. If at all, he/she was looking for substitute mechanisms of bonded security and patronage as the customary ones disintegrated. The crucial question is whether emigration to Malaya provided them security and certainly the bulk of evidence for the indentured phase suggests that it failed. The heavy mortality rate among migrant Indian labourers and the high figures for desertions are two clear indices of their disillusionment. The death rate among the newcomers in some areas appears to have been as high as 80-90%".³

In November 1990 a historic joint declaration was drawn up, officially affirming that the cold war was over, ending a division and conflict that had lasted for four decades. Equally important was its affirmation that the East and West were no longer adversaries. Many legacies of the dominant, opposing economic systems, of categories that marked and divided the world, apparently seemed submerged, as a new global order struggled to find its feet and a host of questions arose for South countries: Along what trajectories would these countries evolve, as highly differentiated as they were? What were the implications for their societies and their local cultures, as they were increasingly drawn into international, institutional cultures, with their global solutions and options for development? The severe economic and power inequalities that have dogged North-South relations were up for redefinition. Was the end of the cold war spelling out a new, freer order for the North countries alone or were global inequalities to find fresh platforms for redress?⁴ How would

Migration of Indian labour was mainly the indenture system, meaning "a legally enforced debt bondage".

the new global order affect the migration of people from and within South countries? Would South Asian nations, like their European counterparts open up their borders to the populations of other countries?⁵ I would like to concentrate on the issues of globalization and migration in the post cold-war era, with special reference to India. Both these issues represent serious challenges to traditional developmental thinking. The 1994 UNDP Report claims that 35 million people from the South have moved to North countries and another million on job contracts. The number of illegal international migrants is estimated to be around 15 to 30 million. World wide there are around 19 million refugees. The South cannot overcome a long-standing history of being dominated and, within their own societies, the dominant social groups continue to marginalise not only migrants but the issue of migration itself. In the corpus of human predicaments the issue of migration repeatedly becomes the site of severe confrontations. It is in this confrontation with the migrant, the archetypal 'other', be it over resources, over ethnic questions or over economic spin-offs, that the problems lie.

I will concentrate principally on the problem of migration during the present reform era to illustrate my point. I will use the term migration as it is commonly understood, both as witnessed in international⁶ and local⁷ flows of people; however, I will also look at overall pictures of the possibilities being held out to the poor within this era. It is generally agreed that hard economic reasons often drive the very poor to other regions. However, the potential impact of the Structural Adjustment Policies on migration is not well understood. Will they alter the character of the nation state and restrict its own role in keeping control on the choices of those who wish to cross borders? Will globalisation be a process that is far larger than the presently interpreted and operationalised term which is synonymous with trade liberalisation?⁸ At the policy intentional level and philosophically when viewing the human condition, whether globalisation in a more humane form could signify profound changes and possibilities for people at the lowest rung of social indicators to be able to avail themselves of resources and build communities in images of their own desires?

b. International migration (North - South Imbalances)

The 1994 UNDP Report places the number of refugees at 19 million, with the rate of South migrants moving to North countries growing by 1 million per year. They suggest that "if one-fifth of humankind, mostly in the industrial countries, has well over four-fifths of global income it perpetuates over production and over consumption in the North... and encourages migration from poor countries to rich".^{9a} International migration includes refugees,^{9b} highly skilled professionals and contract labour. I will deal only with some issues on overseas contract labour.

All the major labour-exporting countries in Asia, i.e., Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Phillipines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, with the exception of Korea and People's Republic of China, have been trying to set up systems for quantifying labour flows, so that policy may be better informed than it is.¹⁰ For most researchers, the databases continue to be the information system of the Overseas Labour Administration, records maintained by the immigration and emigration authorities on the movements of people across international borders, and census and national sample surveys. In addition there are secondary surveys providing fairly coherent, broad overviews¹¹ with data on outflow of overseas contract workers from sample countries over a 20-year span, country-specific labour outflows, and the quanta of remittances by overseas contract workers.¹² The problem of a fairly large presence of undocumented external labour emigration remains, of course. Of the 75,406 emigrant workers who left Sri Lanka during March-August 1990, 60% came under the category of undocumented migration¹³. As of 1990, Thailand after the Phillipines continues to be the second largest supplier of overseas contract labour at 6,38,000 in 1991, Indonesia 1,26,200, India 1,17,500. (data based on Overseas Labour Administration). There has been a decline of labour outflow from India (2,05,922 in 1984 and 1,43,565 in 1990). The unskilled form 44% of the total number of migrants on average (means over 1984 - 1990) and the highly skilled (e.g., engineers) a mere 0.2%. Governments,

including the Indian government, have had scant regard for the protection of their migrant workers. The economy of foreign remittances and foreign-currency-account balances seem to outweigh the losses of dignity, of mounting physical violence against 'foreigners' as a whole and 'workers' in particular. Recent data provided to the Indian Parliament highlight the increasing numbers of deaths of our workers in Gulf countries ¹⁴ and the escalating sexual violence against women migrant workers.¹⁵ Non-governmental organisations are at present underscoring the life situations of the migrant workers, who begin as economic migrants but are later reduced oppressively to refugee status. ¹⁶ Ethnic 'cleansing' or 'recognition', assimilation or rejection, inform this diaspora in almost cyclical fashion. With the growing accent on the building up of foreign-exchange reserves, it is quite likely that there will be a further liberalisation of procedures for foreign remittances and for foreign companies to 'import' Indian labour at low rates. Some joint ventures of Indian companies with foreign multinationals are already in operation: Like their Chinese and Korean counterparts Indian companies negotiate labour outmigration by selling contract services instead of exploiting individual workers, as in the electronics industry. Despite all the reservations suggested here, international labour migration in the case of India has not held out the threat of labour displacement or of inciting population movements on a large scale or ethnic confrontations. The violence that India and Pakistan saw during the partition days, when millions were displaced and on artificially constructed terms had to be relocated under the new nation states,¹⁷ has really been the bedrock on which stand all comparative scales for looking into the life conditions of the migrant and the refugee.

c. Internal migration : The India case

i) Development exodus and the NEP

The other major kind of migration is internal migration, one of the most painful legacies of the twentieth century. In developing countries there are nearly 20 million internally displaced people.

The Indian polity today stands with a population of well over 900 million people; 39.3 % of them have been declared to be below the poverty line. For the state of Orissa the percentage of people below the poverty line is 55.6, to be for Bihar 53.3, and for Madhya Pradesh 43.4... ¹⁸ (1991 figures). These states account for 1/3 of the total tribal population of the country. Permanent and seasonal migration among the tribals accounts for major internal-migration flows; 5,00,000 tribals belonging to the Santhal, Munda, Oroan and Kol tribes have migrated permanently to tea gardens in Assam over the past three decades, largely because of forest encroachment, land alienation and starvation. ¹⁹ Similar exoduses have occurred in the tribal areas of North-West Maharashtra, Eastern Gujarat, Western Madhya Pradesh and Southern Rajasthan, with the impoverished tribals joining the bulk of urban slum dwellers as construction labourers, usually on large development projects and becoming the subjects of one of the gravest neglected off-shoots of the New Economic Policies - the growing casualisation of labour and of the informal sector from which the maximum can be extorted. Here they can be hired, fired, abused and moved with bulldozers in every city's beautification programme. In the mid '70s in Delhi, in predominantly Muslim neighbourhoods, 7 lakh people were evicted by force. ²⁰ Internal migration in India has essentially been poverty induced. When migration has been from rural to urban areas, it has been spurred most often because of a decline in holdings, yield and income. ²¹ K.N.Raj and others have drawn attention to the widening difference in the levels of per capita income in the rural and urban sectors of the economy, a relationship "essentially exploitative in nature, having extremely serious economic, apart from social and political consequences". ²² He shows that, in the early 1950s, India's rural sector accounted for 80% of the population and nearly 70% of the national income. In the late '80s, the rural sector accounted for only 1/2 of the national income. K.N.Raj points to the shortsightedness of governments, their investments being far more on industry and services, thus causing a progressive decline in the rural per capita income. Even before the June '91 economic measures, the tendency to adopt policies which stimulated consumerism among

the upper-income groups was much in evidence. Apart from draining foreign-exchange reserves, it created highly polarised growth as in Latin America. With agriculture getting a declining share of the total investment in the present era and little being done to increase this share (e.g., the rate of extension of irrigated area or diversifying agriculture with a scope for the rural industries to expansion of) there is every likelihood that the '90s will see far more migration to urban areas, especially to the industrial belts. The new liberalised industrial policy being pursued will push up the urban population of 217.2 million (about 25.72% of the country's population). (In states like Kerala, Bihar and Maharashtra, because of certain special circumstances like three good monsoon years in a row, the closure of the textile mills in Bombay, and slower processes in town formation (Kerala), there was a deceleration of migration outflow. It is common knowledge that, by and large, the urban poor shed the shackles of community in leaving behind their selves as the rural poor, but the anomie of the docile labour force becomes their new identity.

In addition to the irresponsible and uneven development strategies of the '80s, there is also the crucial issue of employment. The structure of employment has been less than impressive in India. The organised sector accounts for only 10% of the labour force. Labour-force distribution figures show that, in agriculture, trade, construction and manufacturing, in that order, labour is predominantly unorganised (99% in agriculture and 80% in manufacturing). The Structural Adjustment Policies require the shouldering of large burdens in the short-run. Plant closures, retrenchment and unemployment will mean the loss of four million jobs by the year 2000, subsidy cuts, and mounting debts. Migrants form the bulk of the unorganised sector in India. The growing 'casualisation' and feminisation ^{23b} of labour and an increasing differential between regular and casual wage rates will aggravate the conditions of distress migrations.²⁴

Take a sample slum, Jahangirpuri, in a large metropolis like Delhi: It had 4,800 in 1991 inhabitants and is 12 years old. All of its inhabitants are rural migrants - 70% from UP, 20% from Bengal and 7% from Bihar; all hail from scheduled-caste backgrounds. There is

child labour, wife battery, and alcoholism. 75 households buy vernacular newspapers. Despite the grim disarray of the slum as it "doubles up daily to be a toilet", the inhabitants vow that the village was worse.^{25a} They cite the lack of local, small-scale industries in rural areas and the lack of developed market opportunities in their villages as their reasons for migration. 34% of Delhi's population lives in slums and all predictions indicate a steady increase in this figure.^{25b} An enduring lesson for the spectator, the outsider, is the strong, unshaken conviction of these dwellers in the margins of our cities in their freedom to renegotiate their existence and their survival. Under the most unimaginable conditions of physical hardship, they exercise their rights to belong to civil society and economically to regulate their lives. The problems lie in a state that may succumb to short-term political gains, use coercion on or manipulate those already immiserated.

ii) The growth of the informal sector and communalism

On the one hand, in keeping with Structural Adjustment Policies, the state will pursue its exit policy and cause greater pauperization with few safeguards for the labouring poor. On the other hand, as shown by the events following the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, the Indian nation state has revealed the internal instability it had ignored in its numerous relations with civil society. In many cities, where violent communal clashes occurred, the most oppressed sections of the population became the instruments of untold violence, ethnic hatred and barbaric acts against those of other communities. Muslim doctors, who had saved countless lives in public hospitals located in working-class areas, were targeted overnight by marauding groups. Some were killed while others went into hiding. In a moving paper, "Anti-Muslim Pogrom in Surat",²⁶ Jan Breman describes what happened in Surat. It is an industrial city with a population of 17 lakhs in 1993 (5 lakhs in 1971), a vast petrochemical complex, powerlooms, diamond workshops, and other industrial ateliers. With its influx of national and international capital it is the focal point of informal-sector activity. Surat is itself a "one big transit camp of labour coming in and going off". Breman

describes the lawlessness of the migrants; “temporary and underpaid hands, constantly rotating among the enterprises in their sector of employment, the majority of the people dwelling or floating somewhere... once production falls they are driven out.”²⁶ Most of the migrants are male and unmarried. The gender distortion in the demographic profile was an added reason for the members of this constituency to participate in the post-Ayodhya violence and to “sacrifice” themselves to “martyrdom” (185 died, almost 1/2 of the total number killed in Gujarat). “To my understanding, the city became fertile soil for such a disaster because the political climate has accepted no restrictions to the informalisation of the rapidly expanding economy”²⁶ Breman recounts in vivid detail how, at the Surat railway station, 85,000 tickets were sold at the counters; 2 lakh labour migrants fled because of the pillage and massacre. I remember an exodus of a smaller magnitude, but similar in its intensity, in Bangalore in 1991 during the infamous Cauvery riots: A struggle for water resources between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, led to mayhem and illegal pillaging of the homes of Tamil migrants in Karnataka. The government silently backed the communal tension and the destructive forces thus unleashed by doing little to implement law and order. Migrant Tamil labourers fled in the thousands and I recollect that all construction work in urban areas in this state came to a halt for several months subsequently. Be it the organised violence of communal campaigns or the political struggle for resources, the most vulnerable, unstable and ‘rootless’ communities form the classical ‘weakest’ link.

The destitutes, pavement dwellers, child labourers and men and women labourers who make up the growing populations of migrant labourers will continue to contribute to India’s economic growth, but on terms set by markets and employers. These terms include a negation of all the inalienable rights guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. The gravest tragedy in internal migration in India is that the 19th century reality of the ‘coolie’ continues to dog the footsteps of the migrant.²⁷ Adrift from the once familiar moorings of the forests or the local block-development office in the village, with its feudal structures, the migrant has even less to negotiate with, whether it be with the state

or his employer. They are perpetually bonded to being "contestants for spaces, for survivals, for entry into statehood".²⁸

iii) Limits to policy

Independent India's planning exercise, though strongly devoted to the eradication of poverty in spirit, did not think sufficiently about how to achieve its much-touted objective of 'growth with social justice'.²⁹ Budgets continued to reflect cuts in social-sector spending, while military spending displayed an upward trend.³⁰ Mounting non-plan expenditures, coupled with a flabby bureaucratic presence, snow-balled spending, cuts in which could have been used to step up employment, agriculture production, decentralized rural marketing facilities, agro processing, etc.. Vast regions remained neglected or fell victim to disastrous development projects, spearheaded intellectually by Western development donors and India's academic elite. They had scant respect for people of primitive/older cultures, for whom bonds to the land and to its economies were not those of secular, modern, western-educated India.

The world's largest-ever exercise in human resettlement was the transmigration programme in Indonesia. Six million peasant farmers and their families were transferred from overcrowded Java to the more thinly populated, outlying islands of the vast archipelago-Irian Jaya, Kalimantan, etc. The land rights enjoyed under traditional law by the tribal people in these islands were also outlawed by a Basic Forestry Act, Clarification Act No.2823 of 1967.³¹ former Minister of Transmigration said, "The different ethnic groups of Indonesia will in the long run disappear.... and there will be one kind of man".³¹ Hancock comments that "transmigration's only 'success' has been to export poverty from Java- where it is visible to the remote outer islands where it is hidden from view".³¹ In India, major energy projects, especially hydel, have displaced whole communities and submerged entire villages. Many export-oriented agro industries, marine fisheries, timber industries, etc., have had severe repercussions for those relying on sustenance from traditional operations and for the environment as a whole. Many of the much-needed prescriptions

have been advocated with the Structural Adjustment Policies, e.g., debureaucratization, cuts in non-plan expenditures, deregulation, and delicensing.³² However, there is a lacuna in development concerns touching issues of human security. The safety nets³³ in place at present can only be short-term. The more serious issues that inform the fabric of internal migration - land reforms, employment, social-sector provisions, and services, urbanization, the growing informal sector, and human-rights violations have not been embedded properly in the planning exercise. This is why I referred above to the marginalisation of the issue itself.

In initiating the reform policies India has clearly been invited for membership in a global order, much more market driven than it was in the past. However, it is also time to re-examine earlier socialist enterprises, not with market prescriptions, but with a view to finding alternatives to top-heavy, highly centralised models of governance. Will the periphery ever be at the centre to suggest what humane governance and policy prescriptions should be all about? The poor, the dispossessed, existing on the fringes of want, consumption, desire, and ownership receive neither the privileges of a nation state nor the advantages of freedom. They are the forgotten ones. They remain highly docile, highly elastic, vulnerable to political conflicts, and condemned to selling a lifetime for wages that would equal a year's salary in a North country.

And yet, to the urban poor, this life seems better than the one they had. If there must be scales to human consumption and freedom, surely the migrant understands the lowest denominators and rationalises his own existence with a fine tuning of a magnitude so small that anyone would have trouble understanding that difference.

All the Prime Minister's men, all the economists, demographers, social scientists and development-policy makers will have difficulty in finally coming close to the macro histories and the micro pictures of internal migrants in India, or the refugee anywhere for that matter. When countless flee terror, flee starvation, or just walk away because here or there nothing is left, this history may require a different understanding and writing. The anonymous tribals, peasants,

refugees or victims of ethnic conflicts may have none to mourn their demise and none to rejoice that they continue to fight relentlessly for their survival despite so many negating systems. It is the latter that must be the grounds on which efforts to consolidate and build human securities have to be made by all of us. The problem with policy prescriptives is that they are made, inevitably, post facto.[34] Being alert and insisting on normatives that carry universal human values to provide us with political wisdom is what is required urgently; and this must be done a priori so that large-scale human reversals and tragedies will not be the history of the closing decade of the 20th century. The anonymous migrant represents today one of the most singular tragedies of development.

I have shown above the contradictions inherent in most development efforts. The conditionalities that accompany aid often exacerbate North-South inequalities: globalisation saps the strength of local cultures. The history of modern development is a chronicle of the reshuffling of competing inequalities while maintaining the superiority of the elite nations. The human predicament of migration with its chimerical rewards reveals one more face of insensitive development strategies. Though there are limits to planning, there are no limits to hope, creative resistance, and the sensitive making of history. Father Kappen lived such a life and by such practice.

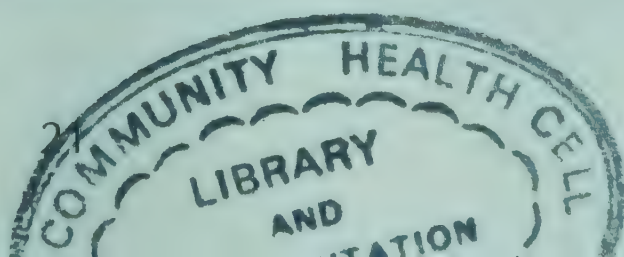
** I remain indebted to all the thinkers who have refused to be shaped by markets. I would like to thank Hivos, the Max Mueller Bhavan, Bangalore, and Visthar for having encouraged me to write the 'beginnings' of a paper from the transcripts of my talk. A substantial part of this paper is work in progress for the Hivos Asia Kaderplan. It is dedicated to Father Kappen who represented that rare school of development practitioners for whom reflection and critical thinking were integral to development work.*

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4. The Report asserts that while nearly 70% of humanity survived in abysmal human conditions in 1960 only 32% suffer such conditions in 1992. Today the richest billion people command 60 times the income of the poorest billion. Among recommendations for global security are
 - 1) foreign assistance linked to commonly agreed policy objectives e.g., poverty reduction strategies, employment opportunities.
 - 2) 0.1% of donor countries GNP to be channelled to a global social safety net.
 - 3) concept of development cooperation to include all flows and not just aid-trade, investment, technology and labour flows.
 - 4) Industrial nations should compensate developing countries for the economic damage that they suffer from market barriers.
 - 5) Global taxation - tradable permits for pollution and on non-renewable energy.
 - 6) Global institutions for the 21st century and strengthening of UN & Bretton Woods institutions.
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- 10a Weiner categorised the major bilateral flows within South Asia into three types: rejected peoples, political refugees from repressive regimes, and unwanted migrants. Weiner (op.cit.) p.1737.
- 10b See Working Papers - ARTEP Phase II Programme on International Labour Migration. Nair, P.R.Gopinathan, "International Labour Migration Statistics in India" May-1993. Rao, Omakant, "International Labour Migration & Information Networking Prospects in India", September, 1993.
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